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ABSTRACT

Over a two-year period this study examined the relationship of two levels of supervision with both the job performance and weekly earnings of the hard-core unemployed (HCU). First- and second-level supervisors were measured on consideration, initiating structure, and social insight. After six months on the job the HCU's perceptions of their first-level supervisor's consideration and initiating structure behaviors were concurrently related to HCU job performance. After two years on the job, the weekly earnings of the HCU were strongly predicted by the six-month perceptions of both first-and second-level supervisory behavior on the consideration and initiating structure dimensions. With both job performance and weekly earnings, consideration was correlated positively and structure negatively. These findings indicate that the relationships with supervisors, particularly early in the HCU's experience with an organization, is indeed related to job success. The positive relationship with consideration indicates that employer's attempts to be successful with the HCU should encourage supervisory styles which are supportive of HCU job efforts, while the negative relationship with structure suggests that supervisors should restrain from imposing structure on a culture which may be unaccustomed to external, rigid demands upon behavior. (Author)

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A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF FIRST- AND SECOND-LEVEL SUPERVIISON, JOB PERFORMANCE, AND THE WEEKLY EARNINGS OF THE HARD-CORE UNEMPLOYED*

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A B S T R A C T

Over a two-year period this study examined the relationship of two levels of supervision with both the job performance and weekly earnings of the hard-core unemployed (HCU). First- and second-level supervisors were measured on consideration, initiating structure, and social insight. After six months on the job the HCU's perceptions of their first-level supervisor's consideration and initiating structure behaviors were concurrently related to HCU job performance. After two years on the job, the weekly earnings of the HCU were strongly predicted by the six-month perceptions of both first- and second-level supervisory behavior on the consideration and initiating structure dimensions. With both job performance and weekly earnings consideration was correlated positively and structure negatively. These findings indicate that the relationships with supervisors, particularly early in the HCU's experience with an organization, is indeed related to job success. The positive relationship with consideration indicates that employer's attempts to be successful with the HCU should encourage supervisory styles which are supportive of HCU job efforts, while the negative relationship with structure suggests that supervisors should refrain from imposing structure on a culture which may be unaccustomed to external, rigid demands upon behavior.

The importance of supervision to the job success of the hard-core unemployed (HCU) has often been cited in research studies (Friedlander and Greenberg, 1971; Beatty, 1971) as well as by practioners (Hodgson and Brenner, 1968). But to date, there has been little reported evidence which indicates whether supervision is only of major importance in the early stages of employment or if supervision continues to be a major factor in HCU job success. Therefore, this study sought to longitudinally investigate the nature of supervisory relationship, not only for first-level supervisors, but also for second-level supervisors, following the recommendation of Nealey and Fiedler (1968:322) who suggested that "the relationship between a leader and group performance seems to be stronger in the case of second-level managers than in the case of the first-level supervisor." The organization studied was the home office of a large, midwestern insurance company employing women in clerical jobs who met HCU criteria for contract funding from the manpower administration.

The supervisory variables, consideration, inititating structure, and social insight, were measured both after six months and again after two years of HCU employment. Consideration and initiating structure were measured by Fleishman's (1957) Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), which was administered to the HCU for descriptions of the behavior of their supervisors. Consideration was described as the courtesy and respect shown for a trainee's feelings and thoughts by her supervisor. Initiating structure measured the degree to which a supervisor directed the work of the HCU in terms of defining both ways of getting the job done and channels of communication (Halpin and Winer, 1957). The third supervisory variable, social insight, was measured by Chapin's (1942) Social Insight Scale which was administered to supervisors to measure the ability to recognize:

> the need to adjust group conflicts or tensions such as known remarks to relax a dangerous intensity, a suggested compromise to attain temporary agreement, a face-saving remark to avoid embarrassment and to preserve status, or to discover the missing part to complete a thought (Chapin, 1942:214).

A further study of the Social Insight Scale indicates that high-scorers on the scale were seen as perceptive and imaginative, quick to respond to nuances and to sense what others think and feel; conversely, the low-scorer was seen as inhibited, cautious, bound by convention, and lacking in verve and independence (Gough, 1965).

The job success variables were measures of HCU job performance and weekly earnings. The job performance measure was the company's standard performance-review form used for all clerical employees. After six months and again two years of supervising the HCU, supervisors recorded job-performance data in terms of specific job behaviors pertaining to ability and productivity. The company's performance-evaluation form conformed to the recommendations of the APA Task Force for criterion variables (1969) by avoiding the use of subjective measures of minority performance (e.g. cooperation) in favor of the actual behavior necessary for successful job performance (e.g. filing and typing for clerical jobs). In addition to reflecting performance with relative objectivity, the form also had demonstrated validity when correlated with performance rankings by the company's training coordinator (Tau = .57; $p < .01$).

The weekly earnings measures were available both at the six-month and two-year intervals, but at six months all HCU had the same earnings and thus earnings were not a meaningful criterion. However, after two years there was sufficient variance in earnings for it to be used as a criterion variable. In fact, after two years on the job, the weekly earnings measure became the more important criterion because the HCU were

placed in different levels of jobs, which demanded different skills and thus different wages. The performance-review form was then less appropriate because it was primarily designed to compare employees in the same job level and thus an employee who was new or performing at a low level in a high skill job could receive a low score on the performance-review form while an experienced employee in a low skill job might receive a high performance score, although not earn as much as the employee in the high skill job. Thus the performance score is a relative score compared to other employees at the same job level while the weekly earnings measure reflects the worth of the job to the company as well as additional earnings adjustments for performance variance within each job level. The weekly earnings measure thereby became the more important criterion for employees with two years of experience.

Results

There was a significant, concurrent relationship between six-month performance evaluations and the consideration and initiating structure variables, but not for social insight (see Table 1). After six months of

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Insert Table 1 about here

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interaction between first-level supervisors and the HCU, the positive relationship between consideration and the negative relationship between initiating structure and job performance appeared to indicate that the initial relationship between a supervisor and a HCU employee is important for the HCU's early job performance. The nature of the relationship appears to be that when the HCU perceives a supervisor as considerate or supportive

the HCU tends to perform more successfully whereas when the HCU perceives a supervisor as highly defining or structuring HCU work activities the HCU tends to perform less successfully.

The table also indicates that the concurrent relationship between the supervisory variables and HCU job success does not remain which provides preliminary evidence that the relationship does not continue after the HCU's early experiences with the company.

The relationships between HCU weekly earnings and supervisory variables are found in Table 2. These findings demonstrate that two-year weekly earnings had no relationship with supervisory social insight, but were highly predicted by the HCU's initial (after six months of

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Insert Table 2 about here

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employment) descriptions of the consideration and initiating structure behaviors of <u>both</u> levels of supervisors. Again, there was a positive relationship with consideration and a negative relationship with initiating structure. There was also a tendency for initiating structure to be concurrently and negatively related to HCU weekly earnings. These findings reinforce the prior conclusion that the initial relationship with a supervisor is related to HCU job success, even for later success within the organization, while also demonstrating that there remains a concurrent tendency for the HCU to resist the imposition of structure by a supervisor even after two years on the job. It may be that the reason supervisory consideration was no longer concurrently related to job success was due

to the HCU receiving other positive reinforcement on the job such as from the work itself or peers and no longer felt a strong need for positive supervisory support.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that HCU perceptions of the behavior of their supervisors, especially initial perceptions, are important for HCU job success. The positive relationship of consideration and the negative relationship of initiating structure with the criterion seem to imply that the HCU tended to be more successful when support is received from a supervisor, but were not as successful when supervisors attempt to rigidly structure the work of the HCU. There was also an indication that after two years on the job the HCU may not need continued supervisory support, but still did not respond favorably to the imposition of structure by a supervisor. Thus, this study would seem to indicate that programs attempting to be successful in the employment of the HCU should in the initial stages, opt for supervisory styles which are supportive of HCU job efforts, and perhaps permanently refrain from imposing structure on a culture which may be unaccustomed to external, rigid demands upon their behavior.

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TABLE 1

Correlations between First- and Second-level Supervisory Variables and HCU Job Performance Evaluations

Relationship	Supervisory level	Supervisory Variable		
		Consideration	Initiating structure	Social insight
Six-month performance with six-month supervision (N=31)	first	.38*	-.31*	.13
	second	.22	-.11	.06
Two-year performance with six-month supervision (N=21)†	first	-.05	.00	.11
	second	-.01	.32	.03
Two-year performance with two-year supervision (N=21)†	first	.22	-.29	.09
	second	-.23	-.02	-.03

*$p < .05$

†To insure that the reduced sample size had not influenced the significance levels of the six-month measures, the six-month relationships were tested with the reduced sample sizes. All relationships remained significant.

TABLE 2

Correlations between First- and Second-level Supervisory Variables and HCU Weekly Earnings

Relationship	Supervisory level	Supervisory Variable		
		Consideration	Initiating structure	Social insight
Two-year weekly earnings with six-month supervision (N=21)	first	.50**	-.73**	.12
	second	.44*	-.58**	-.04
Two-year weekly earnings with two-year supervision (N=21)	first	.16	-.42*	-.04
	second	.16	-.50**	.10

*p < .05

**p < .01